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STATEMENT FROM ANN CLWYD MP FOR CYNON VALLEY TO THE UN DECOLONISATION COMMITTEE IN NEW YORK, 14 AUGUST 1989.

I am grateful for the opportunity to address you today on the subject of East Timor. I speak on behalf of Parliamentarians for East Timor which has nearly 200 members from National Parliaments in 8 countries and in the European Parliament.

We believe it is our duty to speak out about the situation in East Timor, invaded nearly 14 years ago by Indonesian troops. We do this in the knowledge that the UN General Assembly in resolution 1514 of 14th December, 1960 declared its policy quite clearly on the subject of decolonisation: all peoples have the right to self determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status; and the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation, constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights; is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation.

It seems that almost alone among the former colonies the people of East Timor have been denied this right.

In March of 1989 I was one of seven British Parliamentarians who visited East Timor, between the 7th to the 8th of March, at the invitation of the Indonesian Parliament.

I knew little about conditions in East Timor until that time. Our visit was much too brief to undertake any thorough investigation of the Human Rights situation, still less to make an assessment of the views of the East Timorese about their present status. Indeed, in would be quite invidious for me to pretend to be an expert after such a brief official visit. The limitations of such visits are obvious to all of us who are interested in human rights.

The first official we met was Governor Mario Carrascalao. He said that East Timor was now open and we could see what we liked. Having read reports by Amnesty International beforehand, I asked to go, to what I believed was the main prison, the Comarca Prison. He agreed.

During our discussion with the Governor and others we asked about political prisoners in East Timor. The existence of political prisoners was always denied. They said there were categories of prisoners, but no political prisoners.

We were taken to a prison, which turned out to be Becora, but no explanation was given as to why we were taken there and not to the prison I had requested.

Two of my colleagues accompanied me. We were told that the prison was a minimum security prison, that none of the guards carry weapons and that they teach skills to the prisoners.

When we met the prison Governor, I asked to meet Alexei Guterres. He was dressed in civilian clothes. I asked the Indonesians if they would leave us and they all went. During our conversation, an official from the British Embassy interpreted for us.

Alexel told us he had been a go-between in negotiations with Fretilin. He was tried and received a 12 year sentence which was later reduced on appeal to 7 years. He told us he had been tortured on two occasions, from 24-26 October 1986, and then from 9-12 November 1987. It was during the time he was still in the hands of the military.

After being transferred to prison, he was not maltreated any more. He said he had been given a week's leave at home at Christmas. He told us that all prisoners had been moved from Comarca to Becora Prison in 1987 and that there were altogether 14 political prisoners in Becora. He had been well treated there and it was when he was in military hands that he was badly treated. Asked if there was anything we could do, he replied that he needed clothes, food - any sort of help. He said he would be grateful if his case could be brought to the President's attention.

Then we asked to meet Fretilin prisoners and we picked three names from the list we had from Amnesty, whose names we saw on the cell walls, in the central area. We met three other Fretilin prisoners - Gil Fernandes, Luis Mari and Felix. Felix told us that he still supports Fretilin.

Afterwards, we understood that this was not the only prison in Dili and that most detainees are held in military offices and commands where the International Committee of the Red Cross has no access. It is in these places - Koopskam, Korem, Koramil and Kodim - we have been repeatedly informed that violence and torture is common practice. The Becora prison is apparently where convicted prisoners are held, whose cases have been tried and therefore, are subjected to no more violence.

We asked to visit Baucau in the East of the country which was turned down because " no helicopter was available and there was no time". We did however see at least five military helicopters on the ground in East Timor. On our return to Jakarta I told the Defence Minister that we were very disappointed not to be able to go to the area where we had been told the resistance to Indonesian rule still exists. He said that the helicopters were not available for our use.

On the second day of our visit we were taken to an official ceremony where Lieutenant-Colonel Hidayat was being installed as Head of the District, replacing a Timorese, Thomas Goncalves. After the ceremony we went into a room and met the Military Commander. He told us there were 12,000 troops in East Timor; that 60% of the personnel in the Army, Police and Civil Defence were Timorese. He said the troops were there to build roads, help the reforestation programme and build churches for Catholics.

Although a meeting with Bishop Belo, the Apostolic Administrator of East Timor was on our agenda, we were told he was not available. We were not told that he had written to the UN about a referendum.

We had just arrived at our hotel from the airport when we were told that a priest, Father Locatelli, was waiting for us. He had a very awkward conversation with us and he was obviously very uncomfortable, which might have been because of the presence of an Indonesian, who appeared to be a security man.

On the 16th July, when Bishop Belo spoke on the phone to a caller from London, he said he knew nothing about our planned visit and was therefore out of Dili, visiting two parishes in the East, during our visit in March.

We were very interested to learn that the Bishop wrote on 6th February this year, to the UN Secretary-General calling for a plebiscite to ascertain the views of the people of East Timor on the future of their country.

We note that the UN Secretary General has received the letter which was forwarded to him by the Bishop of Setubal. In reply, the Secretary General informed the Bishop of Setubal, that Bishop Belo's letter has been placed before your esteemed Committee for consideration at the present session.

However, on 16 July, when Bishop Belo spoke on the phone to a caller from London, he was not aware that the UN had made any reply. This can only be explained by the fact that Bishop Belo is isolated from the outside world. He said that his mail is being intercepted and all his phone-calls are tapped. We believe it is incumbent upon this Committee to ensure that Bishop Belo is kept fully informed of the UN response to his initiative.

In response to Bishop Belo's call for a plebiscite, we urge this Committee to consider, as a matter of urgency, the conditions under which such a plebiscite might be held. We feel that the following conditions would be essential:

a. The cessation of hostilities between Indonesia and the forces of resistance, three months in advance of the plebiscite.

b. Strict international supervision by a team appointed by the UN and including representatives of the Portuguese government.

c. Withdrawal of all Indonesian troops.

d. Indonesian civilians in the territory should not be permitted to take part in the plebiscite.

e. Universal suffrage. (This is absolutely essential, especially in view of what happened in West Papua in 1969.)

The reactions to Bishop Belo´s UN letter, from Indonesia, have been hostile. The public comments of various Government Ministers, show an attempt to isolate and denigrate him, alleging that he represents no one, but himself.

No East Timorese has been able to speak out in his support. Indeed the text of his letter has not been published in the Indonesian Press nor did any Indonesian newspaper report that a demonstration attended by several thousand people took place in Dili on 28th May, expressing support for the Bishop´s initiative.

An Indonesian Parliamentary delegation which visited East Timor at the beginning of this month, found health conditions in the province were still poor, with malaria endemic in the province; and 70% of the people infected with tuberculosis (Jakarta Post 5 May 1989) The Governor told the delegation that of the 61 Districts of the province, only 40 have physicians and there are only 25 trained midwives. The Governor did not give us any indication of such problems during our interview with him.

The Indonesian authorities now say that East Timor is an open territory. In view of this, Parliamentarians for East Timor in the UK has formally requested permission from the Indonesian authorities, to be allowed to send a mission to East Timor at the earliest opportunity, to investigate the many recent reports of human rights abuses. Our PET group in Australia has also made a similar request.

In the meantime reports of new waves of arrests in East Timor and reports of people being summarily executed in Baucau and elsewhere, give myself, and others, grave cause for concern. Those arrested were said to be detained on suspicion of supporting Bishop Belo´s letter to the United Nations and/or of engaging in clandestine activities in support of the resistance.

We urge to UN Secretary General to consult this Committee urgently and we ask you to ensure that the UN General Assembly´s resolution 1514 of 1960 is put into operation, so that the people of East Timor can freely give their views on their own future.